

SUPPORTING VOLUNTEER MONITORING EFFORTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

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ABSTRACT

Cooperative Extension plays a unique role in extending University research and knowledge to local communities and plays a valuable role in water quality education and environmental stewardship through volunteer monitoring programming. These cost-effective monitoring efforts lead to increased awareness of water quality issues in local communities and to implementation of locally driven water quality improvement projects involving a full spectrum of the community from farmers to inner city residents. The Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service (CSREES) Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring National Facilitation Project (<http://www.usawaterquality.org/volunteer>) has built an on-line support system for volunteer water quality monitoring efforts. Harnessing the know-how from the many existing volunteer monitoring programs, we developed the downloadable “Guide for Growing Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Programs” as the centerpiece for our efforts. This Guide provides succinct, comprehensive and timely information distilled from successful programs across the country, packaged as a suite of factsheet learning modules. For instance, modules exist to help program coordinators design a monitoring strategy, effectively train volunteers and support them over time, ensure data credibility, and plan a data management system. This poster will provide viewers with an overview of the Guide for Growing Programs and resources cited within. Copies of the factsheet learning modules will be provided.

INTRODUCTION

This project began in 2000 and is funded by a National Facilitation Grant from USDA Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service (CSREES). This project is designed to build a comprehensive support system for Extension volunteer water quality monitoring efforts across the country. The goal is to expand and strengthen the capacity of existing programs and support development of new ones. The project is shared by the Universities of Rhode Island and Wisconsin. Linda Green is the project director and principal investigator. Elizabeth Herron and Kristine Stepenuck are primary staff and creators of the Guide for Growing CSREES Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Programs.

KEYWORDS

volunteer monitoring, resources for volunteer monitoring programs, cost-effective monitoring